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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000874

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, NEA/ARP (MCGOVERN) AND INR

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TAGS: [BFIN](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [PGOV](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: C-SA9-01527: PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN EXPATRIATE TIES TO
EXTREMISTS

REF: STATE 71311

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CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR RICHARD OLSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D).

[1](#)1. (S) The responses in para 3 are keyed to reftel request. Post notes that reftel was not addressed to Embassy Abu Dhabi, resulting in delayed response. Post requests that all cables requiring action/information on UAE issues be sent to Embassy Abu Dhabi.

OVERVIEW

[1](#)2. (S) Structurally, the UAE is a relatively open economy with the most vibrant financial sector in the Gulf; its federal structure also gives much economic autonomy to the various emirates, which impose varying levels of regulation and due diligence on economic activity. Characteristic of the region, the use of cash is common for legitimate financial transactions. High volumes of cash and electronic funds flow both to and from Afghanistan and Pakistan, the vast majority of which is derived from legitimate trade and remittances. The lack of effective border controls on cash is no doubt exploited by Taliban couriers and Afghan drug lords, camouflaged among traders, businessmen and migrant workers. Systemically approaching this issue both in the UAE and in the broader Gulf region to disrupt Taliban finances, while protecting commerce and economic activity, is an important, though challenging task. At the suggestion of the UAEG, we have established joint US/UAE task force (composed of interagency elements on both sides) to combat illicit financial flows to and from Afghanistan, specifically bulk cash smuggling.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Begin reftel responses:

[1](#)A. (C) HOW MUCH MONEY DO EXPATS SEND BACK TO THEIR HOME COUNTRY IN ANNUAL REMITTANCES?

As the UAEG does not break down remittance statistics by country, it is difficult to ascertain the total value of funds transferred. Anecdotal information suggests some expatriates transfer as much as 50 percent of their salary, although there is significant variance.

1) (C) BY WHAT CHANNELS? HOW OFTEN?

Most expatriate residents -- of all nationalities -- who remit funds to their home country do so through formal exchange houses (like Western Union and its local competitors) or informal hawala mechanisms. As most employees are paid monthly, workers generally transfer funds on a monthly basis.

2) (S) DOES THE HOST GOVERNMENT MONITOR THE MONEY FLOWS? IF SO, HOW?

The UAE Central Bank maintains records of all financial transactions facilitated by banks, exchange houses and registered hawalas. This information includes names, addresses, phone numbers, and visa details of the sending party as well as information on the receiving party abroad. Similar information is required by Police and Customs officials for physical cash imports exceeded 40,000 AED (approximately USD 10,900).

[1](#)B. (C) WHAT ARE THE METHODS WHEREBY SOUTH ASIANS ARE RECRUITED AND/OR RADICALIZED BY GULF-BASED EXTREMISTS?

Post has limited evidence South Asian expatriates are being recruited or radicalized in the UAE. There are anecdotal reports that one Pashtun Afghan community in the UAE may have tribal or religious ties to the Taliban. UAE authorities are known to observe this group's activities and occasionally disrupt gatherings.

[1](#)C. (U) DESCRIBE AFGHAN AND PAKISTANI EXPATS AND LOCAL NATIONAL DONATIONS TO CHARITIES THAT MAY SEND MONEY TO AFGHANISTAN OR PAKISTAN.

Charitable giving ("zakat") is one of the five pillars of Islam, and, as such, is pervasive in Muslim communities. Donation jars, boxes, ATMs and pledge cards for the major UAE charities (see [1](#)C) are found throughout the country. The UAEG does not directly regulate donations, but rather oversees the establishment and registration of charitable organizations, disbursement of collected funds and goods donations. UAE charities primarily make donations abroad in the form of goods and development projects, not cash.

1) (C) WHICH CHARITIES MIGHT BE ASSOCIATED WITH EXTREMIST GROUPS, TERRORISTS, OR THE AFGHAN OR PAKISTANI GOVERNMENTS?

All legal charitable organizations in the UAE are associated with UAE government officials and entities. The largest of these groups, the

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Red Crescent Authority, the Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Charitable Foundation, and the Mohammed bin Rashid Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, have ongoing charitable activities (including donations of clot activities and employees it monitors closely.

2) (C) DESCRIBE EXPAT AND LOCAL NATIONAL DONATION LEVELS TO THOSE CHARITIES. WHICH ONES ARE MOST POPULAR? WHICH ONES ARE MOST SUSPECTED OF HAVI

The major UAE charities receive significant cash and in-kind donations from senior ruling family members, wealthy Emirati nationals and small donations from other citizens and expatriates. Post does not have comprehensive statistics that reveal which charities are most popular, although the three largest are the only ones authorized to disburse funds overseas.

Ajman-based Human Appeal is suspected of ties to Hamas.

3) (U) PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON ANY CHARITIES RUN BY AFGHAN AND PAKISTANI EXPATS.

Not applicable. In order to be registered, charitable groups must be founded by 20 Emirati nationals.

1D. (U) HOW LARGE IS THE POPULATION OF PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN EXPATRIATE WORKERS IN EACH GULF STATE?

There are approximately 1 million Pakistani expatriates and 150,000 Afghan nationals living in the UAE.

1) (U) HOW MANY IN THE SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY ARE PERMANENT RESIDENTS?

UAE immigration policies do not allow for permanent residence status.

2) (U) HOW MANY ARE GUEST WORKERS?

All expatriates are resident in the UAE on work visas or their dependents.

3) (SBU) WHAT IS THEIR ETHNIC AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, TRIBAL/CLAN MAKE-UP?

Many Pakistanis are low-wage guest workers, predominantly Pashtun/Pathan. Baluchis have intermarried with Emiratis for generations, and many Punjabi and Sindhi elites (including President Zardari) maintain pieds-a-terres in Dubai.

Most Afghan residents are believed to be Pashtun.

1E. (C) WHAT LINKS DO THEY HAVE WITH POLITICAL PARTIES, INSURGENTS, OR OTHER EXTREMISTS IN AFGHANISTAN OR PAKISTAN?

While it can be assumed that the Pakistani and Afghani populations in the UAE represent a wide range of political views, political activism among expatriates is discouraged by UAE authorities.

1F. (SBU) WHO ARE THE KEY LEADERS WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES?

Key leaders are prominent and successful businessmen. Given instability at home, many Afghan and Pakistani business leaders and political figures and their families use the UAE, and Dubai in particular, as a part-time residence and are active in their respective expatriate communities. Among uneducated and unskilled workers, leaders likely emerge along tribal and societal lines.

1) (SBU) WHAT PROMINENT MOSQUES OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS DO THESE EXPATRIATES BELONG TO? DESCRIBE THE MOSQUES' ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIP WITH AFGHANISTAN OR PAKISTAN.

All mosques operate under the direct supervision of the UAEG. None have ties to Afghanistan or Pakistan, aside from the nationalities of congregants. All sermons and announcements in UAE mosques are tightly controlled by the UAE Government.

2) (U) DO EXPATS FOLLOW PROMINENT PAKISTANI, AFGHAN, OR GULF CLERICS? IF SO, WHICH ONES, AND WHY? WHICH PAKISTANI AND AFGHAN CLERICS HAVE THE I

Unknown.

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A) (SBU) WHERE DID PROMINENT CLERICAL LEADERS RECEIVE THEIR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND WHAT SCHOOL OF THOUGHT DO THEY LOOK TO FOR RELIGIOUS GUIDANCE?

There are no known Pakistani or Afghani clerics in the UAE. The Imam who delivers the English language Friday sermon in Abu Dhabi (i.e., the language of many South Asians, is American).

B) (C) DESCRIBE CLERICS' POLITICAL ACTIVITIES IN GULF STATES, PAKISTAN, OR AFGHANISTAN.

All clerics/imams are supervised by the UAEG and are not involved in political activities.

3) (U) WHO ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL OR WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN IN THESE COMMUNITIES? WHAT TYPES OF BUSINESSES ARE THEY INVOLVED IN?

There are a number of successful Pakistani and Afghan businessmen resident in the UAE who are involved in a wide range of trading and services.

4) (C) WHAT LINKS DO THE BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE WITH CLERICS OR EXTREMISTS AT HOME? DESCRIBE ANY ROLE THEY MAY PLAY IN RAISING, HOLDING, OR DISTRIBUTING

Post has no evidence that business leaders are engaged in fundraising or other ties to extremists, although we would not be surprised if it is happening.

1G. (U) HOW DO EXPATS VIEW THE TALIBAN AND OTHER EXTREMISTS IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY? WHAT ASPECTS OF THESE GROUPS' PLATFORMS AND ACTIVITIES DO THEY

Unknown.

1H. (U) HOW DO EXPATS VIEW THEIR GOVERNMENTS IN KABUL OR ISLAMABAD?

Many wealthy Afghans and Pakistanis tell Embassies that they choose to live in the UAE rather than their corrupt and/or failing countries. Others, particularly those with political ties, are committed to eventually returning home to help re-build their countries, but choose to temporarily live in Dubai out of concern for their families' safety.

1I. (S) PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY STEPS THE HOST GOVERNMENTS HAVE TAKEN OR PLANS THEY MIGHT HAVE TO MONITOR OR INFLUENCE THESE EXPAT POPULATIONS.

For national security reasons, the UAEG closely monitors all expatriates, particularly those from Pakistan (the largest expat community in the UAE) and Afghanistan (given concerns about extremism/terrorism). The specific plans are not known.

1J. (S) TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE U.S. EMBASSIES WORKING WITH OTHER THIRD-COUNTRY OFFICIAL PERSONNEL TO GATHER INFORMATION ON AND ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS TERRORIST FINANCING FLOWS TO INSURGENT GROUPS IN AFGHANISTAN/PAKISTAN)?

Embassies have regular exchanges with like-minded countries on financial crimes matters, although historically these efforts have focused on al-Qaida and Iran. There has been ongoing cooperation with like-minded embassies regarding efforts to disrupt drug trafficking and related money laundering through the UAE.

1K. (SBU) PLEASE REPORT ON THE TYPES OF MEDIA FOLLOWED AND/OR PARTICIPATED IN BY AFGHAN AND PAKISTANI EXPATRIATES IN SAUDI ARABIA AND THE GULF

Pakistani nationals are employed at some of the major English language newspapers and satellite television stations based in the UAE.

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